



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney
Eastern District of Texas

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*Contact: Davilyn Brackin
Public Affairs Specialist
(409) 839-2538*

NORTH TEXAS HIDTA NETS 55 ON DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES

(Sherman, TX) This morning, a combined task force of federal and state law enforcement agents began arresting individuals who have been involved in large scale drug trafficking in the Eastern District of Texas. The arrests mark the final phase of a two year investigation into the sale and distribution of illegal drugs including cocaine, crack cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamine and marijuana.

According to court documents, the North Texas HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) began an investigation into the activities of a drug distribution ring which originated and was operating in the North Texas Metroplex area. Beginning in or about 2000, the conspirators began utilizing various suppliers to acquire large quantities of illegal drugs to sell, and recruited numerous individuals to assist in the distribution of the illegal drugs. As a result of this investigation, a federal grand jury in Sherman has returned an indictment charging 55 individuals with Conspiracy to Distribute and Possession with Intent to Distribute illegal drugs. Ten of those defendants are also charged with Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering as well as Aiding and Abetting.

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North Texas Round-up
June 2, 2005

In addition to making the arrests, officers from several local, state and federal agencies also began executing search warrants and seized over 30 properties, residences, additional narcotics, drug proceeds, vehicles and guns associated with the drug trafficking activity. So far, 38 defendants are in custody. Authorities will continue to make arrests during the day.

Matthew D. Orwig, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas, praised the work of the investigators for their efforts to deal with criminal drug activity, "The North Texas HIDTA has dismantled an organization responsible for bringing a significant amount of drugs into the southern United States. The disruption and dismantling of conspiracies like these will continue to be a top priority of law enforcement in the Eastern District of Texas."

Guadalupe Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas Division of the FBI says, " Today's arrests are the result of a concerted effort by local, state and federal law enforcement to address a most serious crime problem in the metroplex. Dallas FBI will continue to work with our local law enforcement partners to vigorously investigate and bring to justice drug traffickers who so negatively impact the quality of life in the communities which we serve."

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If convicted, the defendants face up to life in federal prison and a \$4 million fine. Prosecutors are also seeking criminal forfeiture of over 30 properties believed to have been purchased with proceeds from the illegal activity. It is important to note that an indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of either guilt or innocence. All defendants are considered innocent until proven otherwise.

The North Texas HIDTA is a national initiative comprised of federal and state law enforcement agencies. Congress funded HIDTAs to assist federal, state and local entities in dismantling and disrupting the market for illegal drugs in the U.S.

HIDTA's mission is to reduce the availability of illegal drugs by using intelligence-driven task forces. The North Texas HIDTA consists of five task forces or squads operating throughout the North Texas area. Various squads are headed by FBI, DEA, ATF, ICE and the Fort Worth Police Department working in tandem with local law enforcement departments. Participants target drug traffickers, money laundering organizations and drug related violence which impacts not only this region but other regions of the country. This particular investigation was spear headed by a HIDTA task force housed in the FBI's office located in Plano, and was a collaborative effort of federal, state, and local agents assigned to the task force.

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Specifically, today's early morning arrests and searches were led by the North Texas HIDTA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations Division, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, Texas Department of Public Safety, Denton County Sheriff's Office, Dallas County Sheriff's Office, Denton Police Department, Plano Police Department, and the Dallas Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Heather Harris Rattan is prosecuting the case.

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